

Sūrah 94

Alam Nashrah

(The Opening Up)

(Makkan Period)

Title

The opening words *alam nashrah* (the opening up) provide the very title of this *Sūrah*.

Period of Revelation

In its subject matter, this *Sūrah* is closely related to *Sūrah al-Duḥā* in that it appears that both were revealed during the same period and circumstantial setting. Ibn 'Abbās reports that this *Sūrah* was sent down in Makkah, next to *Sūrah al-Duḥā*.

Subject Matter and Themes

This *Sūrah* too, seeks to comfort and console the Prophet (peace be upon him). Before assuming the office of Messengership he had not come across the hardships that struck him as soon as he commenced preaching Islam. It was a turning point in his own life, of which he had no inkling. The same people who held him in great esteem turned into his worst enemies no sooner than he

invited them to accept Islam. These very people, including his kith and kin, friends, tribesmen and neighbours, who had once waxed lyrical in their praises of him now took to reviling him. No one even cared to listen to him. He was taunted and ridiculed. Hardship confronted him at every step. Although he gradually learnt to cope with all this, he was nonetheless shaken in the early stage. So as to comfort him in such adverse circumstances, Allah first revealed *Sūrah al-Duḥā* to him, followed by this *Sūrah*.

At the outset, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is reassured, told that he need not feel worried, for Allah has bestowed upon him three major bounties: (1) Allah has laid open his breast. (2) He has been relieved of the burden of pre-Prophetic days, and (3) His fame has been exalted on an unprecedented scale, not to be matched by anyone. These three bounties are discussed at length in the explanatory notes below.

Allah, Lord of the universe, assures Muḥammad that this hardship is not a long-lasting phase. Soon there will be ease for him. Almost the same point is affirmed in *Sūrah al-Duḥā* thus: "Indeed what is to come will be better for you than what has gone by. Verily your Lord will soon give you so amply that you will be well-pleased," (Verses 4-5).

Finally, he is instructed that his own inner strength will help him overcome hardship. He can develop this inner strength by devoting himself to worship and by turning exclusively to Allah. The same directive also features in Verses 1-9 of *Sūrah al-Muzzammil*.